

PATENT
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APPLICATION FOR UNITED STATES LETTERS PATENT

for

**ADVERTISING INSERTS FOR FORTUNE COOKIES AND METHODS FOR THEIR
DISSEMINATION**

by

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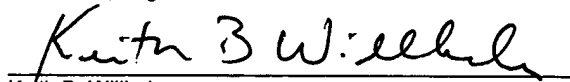
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Keith B. Willhelm

1 **FIELD OF THE INVENTION**

2 The present invention relates to fortune cookies having advertising messages and
3 to methods for disseminating advertising messages, and more particularly, to fortune
4 cookies comprising improved advertising inserts and to methods for disseminating
5 advertising messages to consumers of fortune cookies.

6 **BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

7 Fortune cookies are a traditional and nearly universal part of the dining experience
8 in Chinese restaurants in the United States. They typically are presented at the end of a
9 meal with the check. Diners eagerly break open the crispy cookies to find a small slip of
10 paper with a fortune or message.

11 The recipe for fortune cookies is relatively simple. The dough is made from egg
12 whites, sugar, butter, and flour flavored with vanilla. A thin circular sheet of dough is
13 then baked. Before the baked dough cools and while it is still pliable, a message slip is
14 placed on the sheet and the dough is folded and crimped into the traditional puffed arch
15 shape.

16 The history of fortune cookies can be traced to the Yuan Dynasty of fourteenth
17 century China. China was then occupied by the Mongols. Chu Yuan Chang, the leader
18 of the "Red Turbans" Han resistance movement, was attempting to capture the city of
19 Ch'u-chou, a highly fortified and strategically important city. While the idea is
20 sometimes attributed to Chu's chief military advisor Liu Po-wen, a plan was devised to
21 rally the inhabitants of the city by using "moon" cakes, a popular Chinese pastry made
22 from lotus nut paste. Disguised as a Taoist priest, Chu entered the city and began to
23 spread a rumor among the city's Han population that a plague was ravaging the land. The
24 Hans were given moon cakes and told that the only way the plague could be avoided was
25 by eating them at the first stroke of the third watch during the Mid-Autumn Festival. The
26 moon cakes had a tiny slip of paper with a secret message printed on them: "Revolt on the
27 fifteenth of the eighth moon. Our army will join you at the fifth watch." The uprising
28 was successful and led to the establishment of the Ming dynasty in 1368. Thereafter, it
29 became common for the Chinese to exchange moon cakes containing messages of good
30 will during New Year and other holidays.

1 The modern fortune cookie, however, was invented in the United States. The
2 wave of Chinese immigrants that came to America to build the transcontinental railroads
3 brought with them the tradition of moon cakes. The traditional ingredients were not
4 readily available, however, and so the recipe was changed slightly. Although there is
5 some disagreement as to the exact origin, it is widely believed that the first incarnation of
6 the modern fortune cookie was served by San Francisco restaurateur Makota Hagiwara in
7 1909 at his Japanese Tea Garden in Golden Gate Park.

8 The first cookies were baked and formed by hand. The first automated machine
9 for forming fortune cookies was invented by Edward Louie, a Canton-born immigrant
10 living in San Francisco. His machine is the subject of U.S. Pat. 3,950,123. Fully
11 automated machines for baking and forming fortune cookies are disclosed in U.S. Pat.
12 4,339,993 to Y. Lee, U.S. Pat. 4,426,186 to Y. Lee, and U.S. Pat. 4,431,396 to Y. Lee and
13 are commercially available from Sci Technology Inc., Westborough, Massachusetts,
14 U.S.A. Such machines typically incorporate one or more vacuum fingers that place
15 individual message slips onto a baked cookie dough or "blank". Alternatively, a roll of
16 preprinted message slips are fed into a cutter which cuts individual slips which then are
17 allowed to fall onto a cookie blank.

18 Early fortune cookie message slips carried Bible passages, Confusion epigrams,
19 truisms, famous quotes, and whimsical predictions. Lucky lottery numbers later were
20 printed on the back of the slip. Eventually, however, the potential for delivering
21 advertising and other messages was recognized. Police in Hong Kong have used them to
22 deliver anti-drug messages. Director Billy Wilder promoted his 1966 movie, *The Fortune*
23 *Cookie*, by distributing 15,000 cookies to exhibitors, journalists and restaurateurs with the
24 message, "There's a marvelous picture in your future!" More recently, the back side of
25 message slips have carried branding messages.

26 The potential for effectively delivering advertising messages through fortune
27 cookies is enormous. Many forms of direct advertising are never viewed by their
28 intended audience. For example, direct mail advertising typically generates a 2% overall
29 response rate, but more than ___% of direct mail advertising delivered is not viewed by the
30 recipients. Thus, direct mail advertising presents a very inefficient and wasteful form of

1 advertising. Internet advertisements typically have a “view” rate of from 1 to 15%, most
2 commonly on the order of 2%, meaning that the substantial majority of e-mail
3 advertisements are never viewed by their recipients. Message slips in fortune cookies,
4 however, are almost universally viewed, thus, ensuring that advertising messages
5 contained in fortune cookies will be effectively delivered to consumers.

6 Moreover, the distribution costs for delivering direct mail advertising and other
7 forms of direct advertising are substantial. Distributing advertising messages through
8 fortune cookies is in a sense nearly cost free. That is, other than the cost of printing or
9 otherwise preparing the advertising message itself, there is little incremental cost in
10 disseminating advertising messages through fortune cookies over and above the cost of
11 producing and distributing the cookies themselves.

12 Unfortunately, the effectiveness of using fortune cookies to disseminate
13 advertising is significantly limited by the size of fortune cookies. Traditionally sized
14 fortune cookies are made from a circular blank that typically is approximately 3 inches in
15 diameter, and conventional machinery for producing fortune cookies are designed to
16 accommodate blanks of that size. The relatively small size of traditional fortune cookies
17 in turns limits the size of the message slip that may be carried therein.

18 Typically, the message slips are approximately 0.5 to 0.625” in length and up to
19 approximately 2.75” wide. Such slips have less than approximately 1.72 square inches of
20 space available for imprinting an advertising message, one face of the slip being reserved
21 for the fortune message. That does not provide space for delivering much more than a
22 branding type message, but larger slips will tend to crimp unacceptably in traditionally
23 sized fortune cookies. Traditionally sized message slips, therefore, have proven
24 unsuitable for delivering more extensive and sophisticated advertising messages.

25 In particular, many products, such as food and consumer household products, are
26 promoted extensively using manufacturer coupons. Such coupons typically offer a
27 discount on specifically identified products and are distributed to consumers through
28 various media such as newspapers and direct mailings. Consumers may redeem the
29 coupons with merchants selling the product. The merchants in turn are reimbursed by the
30 manufacturer or distributor of the product. The vast majority of manufacturer coupons

1 are redeemed by merchants through a clearing house such as NCH Marketing Services,
2 Deerfield, Illinois. The automated processing of such manufacturer coupons essentially
3 requires that they incorporate machine readable indicia, such as UPC bar codes utilizing
4 the UCC/EAN-128 Article Numbering System. Information on standards for
5 manufacturer coupons is publicly available, for example, through Uniform Code Council,
6 Inc., Lawrenceville, New Jersey, and through Grocery Manufacturers of America, Inc.,
7 Washington, D.C. The message slips in traditionally sized fortune cookies, however, as a
8 practical matter are too small to accommodate a bar code and even minimal product
9 identification as is required to produce a consumer redeemable, manufacturer coupon.

10 Oversized fortune cookies have been sold commercially. For example, 17-inch
11 fortune cookies with customized messages have been offered for sale. While oversized
12 cookies do accommodate much larger message slips, they are much more expensive than
13 traditionally sized fortune cookies and may provide more cookie than most consumers
14 care to eat. Such oversized cookies and message slips also appear to be hand made and
15 poorly suited to conventional automated machinery used to produce fortune cookies.
16 More importantly, however, those factors tend to discourage mass distribution of fortune
17 cookies and, therefore, limit the reach of an advertising campaign.

18 An object of this invention, therefore, is to provide improved methods for
19 disseminating advertising messages to consumers of fortune cookies and improved
20 advertising inserts suitable for use in fortune cookies.

21 It also is an object to provide advertising inserts capable of delivering more
22 extensive and sophisticated advertising messages, such as redeemable manufacturer
23 coupons, especially such inserts that may be used to advantage in traditionally sized
24 fortune cookies.

25 Another object of this invention is to provide such advertising inserts having
26 increased imprintable surface area, and especially such inserts that may be used to
27 advantage in traditionally sized fortune cookies.

28 Yet another object is to provide such improved advertising inserts that may be
29 inserted by conventional machinery and processes used in mass producing fortune
30 cookies with little or no modification.

It is a further object of this invention to provide such methods and inserts wherein all of the above-mentioned advantages are realized.

Those and other objects and advantages of the invention will be apparent to those skilled in the art upon reading the following detailed description and upon reference to the drawings.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The subject invention provides for methods for disseminating advertising messages to consumers of fortune cookies. The methods comprise providing novel inserts constructed in accordance with the subject invention and selected from the group consisting of all or any combination of said novel inserts. The novel inserts have imprinted thereon an advertising message which may be viewed by a consumer. Fortune cookies are produced with novel inserts carried therein, and the fortune cookies are distributed to consumer outlets, such as food service establishments, and thence to consumers associated with the consumer outlets.

The novel fortune cookie inserts comprise various embodiments, including inserts comprising a plurality of superimposed, imprintable substrate sheets; inserts comprising a plurality of imprintable substrate sheets, wherein the substrate sheets are affixed to each other; inserts comprising an imprintable substrate sheet having a fold therein, and preferably a horizontally or vertically oriented fold therein; inserts wherein the advertising message imprinted on the insert includes a manufacturer coupon redeemable by a consumer of the fortune cookie having imprinted thereon machine readable indicia to facilitate automated processing of the coupon. Preferably the machine readable indicia are a UPC bar code utilizing the UCC/EAN-128 Article Numbering System or another bar code.

It will be appreciated that the novel fortune cookie inserts, while still requiring substantially the same space to accommodate them within a fortune cookie, have significantly more area available for imprinting an advertising message. Moreover, by increasing the imprintable area of the insert, more extensive and sophisticated advertising messages may be provided even in traditionally sized fortune cookies. Traditionally sized message slips are poorly suited to much more than very simple branding messages, such

1 as an advertisers name, slogan, or logo. As a practical matter it is impossible to provide a
2 redeemable manufacturer coupon via traditional message slips because of size constraints.

3 The novel inserts, however, by providing significantly greater imprintable areas,
4 may incorporate much more sophisticated advertising messages. In particular, they have
5 sufficient imprintable surface area to accommodate a manufacturer coupon, including the
6 requisite product information and machine readable bar code used in systems that manage
7 accounting between coupon issuers and merchants. It also will be appreciated that the
8 cost of producing the inserts is minimal compared to the value of the advertising and that
9 the advertising messages may be effectively disseminated for little incremental cost over
10 the normal costs of producing and distributing fortune cookies other than the cost of
11 producing the inserts themselves.

12 The subject invention also provides for fortune cookies comprising the novel
13 inserts, including traditionally sized fortune cookies where the insert comprises in excess
14 of about 3.5 square inches, and preferably in excess of about 7.0 square inches.

15 Finally, the subject invention provides for methods for packaging and distributing
16 fortune cookies for dissemination to a target consumer group. The methods comprise
17 providing fortune cookies having an advertising insert which has an advertising message
18 for a target consumer group. The fortune cookies are packed in a shipping carton having
19 a machine readable indicator uniquely associated with the advertising message. The
20 indicator is read and the carton is then shipped to consumer outlets associated with the
21 target consumer group.

22 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

23 **FIGURE 1** is a top plan view of a first preferred embodiment **10** of the
24 advertising inserts of the subject invention, which insert **10** comprises three superimposed
25 imprintable substrate sheets;

26 **FIG. 2** is a cross-sectional view of the novel advertising insert **10** shown in **FIG.**
27 **1** taken along line **2-2** thereof showing the construction of insert **10**;

28 **FIG. 3** is a cross-sectional view similar to the view of **FIG. 2** of another
29 advertising insert **110** which is similar to advertising insert **10** shown in **FIG. 1**, except
30 that it comprises two superimposed sheets;

1 **FIG. 4** is a top plan view of a web **12** from which the novel insert **10** may be
2 fabricated;

3 **FIG. 5** is a schematic view of a system **20** for forming and placing the novel insert
4 **10** in a fortune cookie as the cookie is formed;

5 **FIG. 6** is a top plan view of a second preferred embodiment **30** of the advertising
6 inserts of the subject invention, which insert **30** comprises three laminated imprintable
7 substrate sheets;

8 **FIG. 7** is a cross-sectional view of the novel advertising insert **30** shown in **FIG.**
9 **6** taken along line 7-7 thereof showing the construction of insert **30**;

10 **FIG. 8** is a cross-sectional view similar to the view of **FIG. 7** of another
11 advertising insert **130** which is similar to advertising insert **30** shown in **FIG. 6**, except
12 that it comprises two laminated sheets;

13 **FIG. 9** is a top plan view of a web **32** from which the novel insert **30** may be
14 fabricated;

15 **FIG. 10** is a cross-sectional view of the web **32** shown in **FIG. 9** taken along line
16 **10-10** thereof;

17 **FIG. 11** is schematic view of a system **40** for forming and placing the novel insert
18 **30** in a fortune cookie as the cookie is formed;

19 **FIG. 12** is a top plan view of a third preferred embodiment **50** of the advertising
20 inserts of the subject invention, which insert **50** comprises an imprintable substrate sheet
21 having a single horizontal fold therein;

22 **FIG. 13** is a cross-sectional view of the novel advertising insert **50** shown in **FIG.**
23 **12** taken along line 13-13 thereof;

24 **FIG. 14** is a cross-sectional view similar to the view of **FIG. 13** of another
25 advertising insert **150** which is similar to advertising insert **50** shown in **FIG. 12**, except
26 that it comprises two horizontal folds;

27 **FIG. 15** is a top plan view of a web **52** from which the novel insert **50** may be
28 fabricated;

29 **FIG. 16** is a schematic view of a system **60** for forming and placing the novel
30 insert **50** in a fortune cookie as the cookie is formed;

1 **FIG. 17** is a top plan view of a fourth preferred embodiment **70** of the advertising
2 inserts of the subject invention, which insert **70** comprises an imprintable substrate sheet
3 having a single vertical fold therein;

4 **FIG. 18** is a cross-sectional view of the novel advertising insert **70** shown in **FIG.**
5 **17** taken along line **18-18** thereof;

6 **FIG. 19** is a cross-sectional view similar to the view of **FIG. 18** of another
7 advertising insert **170** which is similar to advertising insert **70** shown in **FIG. 17**, except
8 that it comprises two vertical folds;

9 **FIG. 20** is a top plan view of a web **72** from which the novel insert **70** may be
10 fabricated;

11 **FIG. 21** is a schematic view of a system **80** for forming and placing the novel
12 insert **70** in a fortune cookie as the cookie is formed;

13 **FIG. 22** is a top plan view of a fifth preferred embodiment **90** of the advertising
14 inserts of the subject invention, which insert **90** comprises a horizontal and a vertical fold
15 and is shown in its unfolded state;

16 **FIG. 23** is a cross-sectional view similar to the view shown in **FIG. 7** of another
17 advertising insert **230** which is similar to advertising insert **30**, except that the sheets
18 thereof are affixed at only one end of the sheets;

19 **FIG. 24** is a cross-sectional view similar to the view of **FIG. 13** of another
20 advertising insert **250** which is similar to advertising insert **50** shown in **FIG. 12**, except
21 that it comprises two horizontal folds;

22 **FIG. 25** is a cross-sectional view similar to the view of **FIG. 18** of another
23 advertising insert **270** which is similar to advertising insert **70** shown in **FIG. 17**, except
24 that it comprises two vertical folds; and

25 **FIG. 26** is a cross-sectional view similar to the view of **FIG. 13** of another
26 advertising insert **190** which is similar to advertising insert **110** except that it has a
27 horizontal fold therein.

28 **DESCRIPTION OF ILLUSTRATIVE EMBODIMENTS**

29 The subject invention is directed to improved advertising inserts having
30 substantially greater area on which may be imprinted advertising messages and to fortune

1 cookies incorporating such improved advertising inserts. The advertising inserts are
2 composed of an imprintable substrate and may be composed of one or more sheets of
3 such substrate having a total imprintable surface area substantially greater than the
4 surface area of message slips incorporated into traditionally sized fortune cookies.

5 In accordance with a first preferred embodiment, the novel advertising inserts
6 comprise a plurality of superimposed, imprintable substrate sheets. For example, as will
7 be appreciated from **FIGURES 1 and 2**, insert **10** comprises three superimposed sheets
8 **11a, 11b, and 11c**. The novel inserts, however, also may comprise two, four, or more
9 than four superimposed sheets. For example, insert **110** shown in **FIG. 3** comprises two
10 sheets **111a and 111b**. The precise number of sheets is a matter of choice, although the
11 limit on the number of sheets that may be accommodated in a cookie of a given size will
12 vary depending on the number of factors such as the thickness of the sheets and the
13 stiffness and other physical properties of the substrate. Generally it may be preferable to
14 use thinner sheets as the number of sheets in the insert increases.

15 The size and folding pattern for the vast majority of fortune cookies is more or
16 less standardized. Moreover, the length and width of message slips used in such
17 traditionally sized fortune cookies appears to be maximized. Accordingly, the length and
18 width of the sheets **11a, 11b, and 11c** preferably approximate the length and width of
19 message slips used in traditional fortune cookies so that the novel insert **10** may be used
20 without significant modification of the traditional size and folding pattern of fortune
21 cookies. Such cookies are made from circular dough blanks that typically are
22 approximately 3 inches in diameter. Traditional message slips incorporated into cookies
23 made from blanks of those sizes are typically approximately 0.5 to 0.625" in length and
24 up to approximately 2.75" wide. Generally, it will be desirable to maximize the length
25 and width of the sheets **11a, 11b, and 11c**, and such values are believed to approximate
26 the dimensional limits imposed by the traditional folding pattern used to produce the
27 distinctive puffed arch shape. In the event that the size of the cookie is increased or
28 decreased, or the folding pattern of the cookie dough is changed, however, the
29 dimensional limits will vary accordingly.

1 It will be appreciated that by incorporating a plurality of superimposed sheets, the
2 area available for imprinting advertising messages may be increased significantly, yet the
3 space occupied by the insert within a cookie may be substantially the same. For example,
4 if two sheets are used, one side of one sheet may be used to imprint a traditional "fortune"
5 message. Three faces are available for imprinting advertising messages, thereby
6 increasing the amount of advertising space over a traditional message slip by 200%.
7 Similarly, if three sheets are used there will be an increase of 400%. If desired, the
8 fortune message need not be provided, further increasing the space available for
9 advertising messages. The precise number will vary, but it will be appreciated that a
10 number of sheets may be incorporated into the insert without significantly increasing the
11 area required to accommodate the insert.

12 The sheets 11a, 11b, and 11c may be composed of any of a wide variety of
13 imprintable substrates conventionally used in printed advertising materials. Bond, book,
14 and other types of paper based stock are preferred as they are relatively inexpensive,
15 suitable for use in food products, may be handled relatively easily by automated
16 equipment, and provide an excellent substrate for conventional printing processes.
17 Machine glazed paper is especially preferred as it will provide improved print quality.
18 Other imprintable films and laminates, such as HDPE films, metallic films, synthetic or
19 natural nonwoven fibrous substrates, are commercially available and may be used,
20 however, as will be appreciated by those of ordinary skill in the art. Such films must
21 enable the imprinting of an advertising message. They also should have tear, tensile,
22 stiffness, memory, and other physical characteristics that render them suitable for use in
23 automated printing and cookie manufacturing equipment. Since fortune cookies are
24 intended for consumption, the substrate must be suitable for use in food products, and
25 most preferably is approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for such use. The
26 sheets used in a single insert also may be made from the same substrate or different
27 substrates.

28 The advertising message may be imprinted by any of a number of conventional
29 printing processes well known to workers in the art. It will be further appreciated, that in
30 the context of the subject invention, imprinting will be understood not only to include

1 such printing processes, but also impressing, watermarking, bonding, fusing, embossing,
2 burning, stenciling and other processes by which indicia may be imparted to the substrate
3 to communicate the desired advertising message that are suitable for use in association
4 with food products. The precise method of imprinting will be coordinated with the
5 choice of substrate, and vice versa. Printing the advertising message, however, is
6 preferred for cost reasons and because it allows great flexibility in presenting the
7 advertising message. Soy based inks are preferably used as they are suitable for use in
8 association with food products, as are other inks approved by the U.S. Food and Drug
9 Administration for such use.

10 The advertising message, of course, will be determined by the advertiser. It will
11 be appreciated, however, that when the message includes a manufacturer coupon
12 redeemable by a consumer, it will be advisable to select substrates and imprinting
13 methods that provide relatively high quality printing. That will improve machine
14 readability of the bar code that as a practical matter must be associated with a
15 manufacturer coupon.

16 Fortune cookies with the novel advertising insert **10** may be produced by making
17 relatively minor modifications to conventional processes and machinery. For example,
18 one type of conventional automated cookie baking and forming machine utilizes a
19 continuous web or roll of preprinted message slips. Typically, the machine includes
20 means for registering the web to ensure that the preprinted messages are cut accurately.
21 For example, the web may have index holes such that it may be fed through an index
22 roller to a cutter. Alternately, the web may be provided with printed indexing bars such
23 that the web may be fed through an optical reader that registers the action of a cutter, and
24 such systems generally provide improved speed and reliability. The cutter, at
25 predetermined intervals, cuts off an individual message slip which is allowed to fall onto
26 the baked cookie blank. The blank is then folded and crimped and allowed to cool.

27 For example, as shown in **FIG. 4**, the novel advertising insert **10** may be
28 fabricated from a continuous web **12** that will provide a plurality of sheets **11** defined by
29 cut lines **13**, each having a message imprinted thereon. Preferably, the web **12** is
30 provided with index holes **14** to facilitate feeding of the web **12** and accurate registration

1 of the web 12 for subsequent operations as discussed below. Alternately, however, the
2 web may be provided with printed index bars capable of being read by an optical reader
3 the output of which is used to register the web, and such systems are known and used by
4 workers in the art for such purposes.

5 A preferred system 20 for forming and placing the insert 10 in a cookie as it is
6 formed is shown schematically **FIG. 5**. As shown therein, web 12a is carried on a roll
7 21a. Similarly webs 12b and 12c are carried on rolls 21b and 21c. All three webs 12a,
8 12b, and 12c are fed over an index roller 22 to a cutting station where a cutting knife 23
9 cuts the superimposed webs 12a, 12b, and 12c along the cut lines 13. The insert 10
10 formed thereby then is allowed to fall onto a cookie blank 24 carried on a conveyor
11 surface 25. While system 20 is preferred because it may be incorporated relatively easily
12 into conventional automated fortune cookie baking apparatus, other systems may be used
13 and will be obvious to those working in the art.

14 Alternately, all three sheets 11 of insert 10 may be formed from a single web
15 similar to web 12 which is cut three times for each cookie blank. The web would be
16 preprinted accordingly. It will be appreciated that systems for producing such inserts may
17 not require multiple web rolls. Other factors being equal, however, such systems would
18 have lower production rates because each cookie blank must remain in place under the
19 cutting station much longer and the web roll would have to be changed more frequently.

20 In accordance with a second preferred embodiment, the novel advertising inserts
21 comprise a plurality of imprintable substrate sheets, wherein the substrate sheets are
22 affixed to each other. For example, as will be appreciated from **FIGS. 6 and 7**, insert 30
23 comprises three sheets 31a, 31b, and 31c. The novel inserts, however, also may comprise
24 two, four, or more than four sheets. For example, insert 130 shown in **FIG. 8** comprises
25 two sheets 131a and 131b. The precise number of sheets is a matter of choice, although
26 the limit on the number of sheets that may be accommodated in a cookie of a given size
27 will vary depending on the number of factors such as the thickness of the sheets.
28 Generally it may be preferable to use thinner sheets as the number of sheets in the insert
29 increases.

1 Sheets **31a**, **31b**, and **31c** are releasably laminated together preferably by a
2 releasable adhesive. Suitable adhesives are well known to workers in the art, such as a
3 low tack, peelable adhesive. As with the other materials used in the insert **30**, the
4 adhesive must be suitable for use in association with food products such as those
5 adhesives approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for such use. Other
6 methods of laminating the sheets are known, however, and may be used provided those
7 methods and materials also suitably bind the sheets and may be used with food products.

8 The length and width of the sheets **31a**, **31b**, and **31c**, as discussed above in
9 reference to the first preferred embodiment **10**, preferably approximate the length and
10 width of message slips used in traditional fortune cookies, but the dimensions may vary
11 as appropriate. Likewise, the sheets **31a**, **31b**, and **31c** may be composed from the same
12 materials and imprinted as discussed above in reference to first preferred embodiment **10**.

13 Fortune cookies with the novel advertising insert **30** also may be produced by
14 making relatively minor modifications to conventional processes and machinery. For
15 example, as shown in **FIGS. 9** and **10**, the novel advertising insert **30** may be fabricated
16 from a continuous laminated web **32** that will provide a plurality of inserts **30** defined by
17 cut lines **33**, each sheet **31** thereof having a message imprinted thereon. Preferably, the
18 web **32** is provided with index holes **34** to facilitate feeding and registration of the web
19 **32**. Alternately, however, the web may be provided with printed index bars and
20 registered with an optical reader system.

21 A preferred system **40** for forming and placing the insert **30** in a cookie as it is
22 formed is shown schematically **FIG. 11**. As shown therein, a preformed laminated web
23 **32** is carried on a roll **41** and fed over an index roller **42** to a cutting station where a
24 cutting knife **43** cuts the laminated web **32** along the cut lines **33**. The insert **30** formed
25 thereby then is allowed to fall onto a cookie blank **44** carried on a conveyor surface **45**.
26 While system **40** is preferred because it may be incorporated relatively easily into
27 conventional automated fortune cookie baking apparatus, other systems may be used and
28 will be obvious to those working in the art.

29 Suitable methods and apparatus for producing the laminated web **32** are also
30 known to workers in the art. Alternately, the laminated web **32** may be formed

1 immediately prior to cutting of the inserts. Such a system may include multiple web rolls
2 similar to the system **20** shown in **FIG. 5** and may also include suitably configured rollers
3 for applying adhesive and compressing the webs together after adhesive has been applied.

4 It will be appreciated that the sheets **31** in insert **30** are affixed to each other by a
5 substantially continuous layer of adhesive extending across the entire opposing faces
6 thereof. It is not necessary, however, or even desirable to do so. The adhesive may be
7 applied discontinuously, *e.g.*, in spots or lines. Also, while insert **30** has a laminated
8 structure, *i.e.*, the sheets **31** are affixed together substantially across their entire extent,
9 this embodiment of the subject invention encompasses other structures wherein only a
10 portion of the sheets may be affixed to each other. For example, the substantial portion of
11 the insert may be laminated together, but areas near the edges of the sheets may be left
12 free of adhesive to facilitate separation of the sheets by a consumer. Also, the sheets may
13 be affixed together at only one end thereof. For example, insert **230** shown in **FIG. 23**,
14 comprises three sheets **231a**, **231b**, and **231c** which are affixed at only one end thereof,
15 the other ends of the sheets being free of adhesives or binders. This forms a "booklet"
16 insert that allows the individual sheets to be viewed and separated more easily by a
17 consumer. Of course, in the event that the sheets are not intended to be separated by a
18 consumer, such a booklet insert may be formed by affixing the ends of the sheets together
19 with a non-releasable adhesive.

20 Other embodiments of the subject invention have inserts comprising an
21 imprintable substrate sheet have a fold therein. For example, in accordance with a third
22 preferred embodiment, the novel advertising inserts comprise an imprintable substrate
23 sheet having a horizontal fold therein such as insert **50** shown in **FIGS. 12** and **13**. As
24 shown therein, insert **50** comprises an imprintable substrate sheet **51** having a single fold
25 thereby forming layers **51a** and **51b**.

26 The length and width of the formed insert **50**, as discussed above in reference to
27 the first and second preferred embodiments **10** and **30**, preferably approximate the length
28 and width of message slips used in traditional fortune cookies, but the dimensions may
29 vary as appropriate. Likewise, the substrate sheet **51** may be composed from the same

1 materials and imprinted as discussed above in reference to the other preferred
2 embodiments.

3 It will be appreciated that by incorporating a horizontal fold, the size of the sheet
4 and the area available for imprinting an advertising message will be increased
5 substantially. For example, if a single horizontal fold is used, the sheet may be made
6 twice as large, but the formed insert will still have the height and width of a traditional
7 message insert. Likewise, with two horizontal folds the sheet may be made three or four
8 times as large, depending on the folding pattern. The space available for imprinting a
9 message will be likewise increased. More importantly, however, the height of the sheet
10 may be increased, and heretofore, the height of traditional message inserts has been
11 severely constrained.

12 Fortune cookies with the novel advertising insert **50** may be produced by making
13 relatively minor modifications to conventional processes and machinery. For example, as
14 shown in **FIGS. 15**, the novel advertising insert **50** may be fabricated from a continuous
15 web **52** that will provide a plurality of sheets **51** defined by cut lines **53**, each having a
16 message imprinted thereon. Preferably, the web **52** is provided with index holes **54** to
17 facilitate feeding and registration of the web **52**. Alternately, however, the web may be
18 provided with printed index bars and registered with an optical reader system.

19 A preferred system **60** for forming and placing the insert **50** in a cookie as it is
20 formed is shown schematically **FIG. 16**. As shown therein, web **52** is carried on a roll **61**
21 and fed over an index roller **62** to a cutting station where a cutting knife **63** cuts the web
22 **52** along the cut lines **53**. The sheet **51** formed thereby is carried on a folding station,
23 where a folding blade **66** then folds sheet **51** along fold lines **55**. The insert **50** formed
24 thereby then is allowed to fall onto a cookie blank **64** carried on a conveyor surface **65**.
25 While system **60** is preferred because it may be incorporated relatively easily into
26 conventional automated fortune cookie baking apparatus, other systems may be used and
27 will be obvious to those working in the art.

28 While insert **50** is provided with a single horizontal fold, the novel inserts of the
29 subject invention may comprise two or more horizontal folds. For example, insert **150**
30 shown in **FIG. 14** comprises two horizontal folds. The folds are accordion like and form

1 an insert having three layers **151a**, **151b**, and **151c**. Insert **250** shown in **FIG. 24** also has
2 two horizontal folds. The insert is formed by folding and then refolding a sheet, and thus,
3 it has four layers **251a**, **251b**, **251c**, and **251d**. The precise number of folds and the
4 pattern of folding is a matter of choice, although the limit on the number of folds that may
5 be accommodated in a cookie of a given size will vary depending on the number of
6 factors such as the thickness of the sheet. Generally it may be preferable to use thinner
7 sheets as the number of folds in the insert increases. The apparatus and processes
8 required for folding the substrate also become more complicated as the number of folds
9 and the complexity of the folding pattern is increased. For example, insert **250** may be
10 more easily formed than insert **150** because it may be formed with a single folding blade.

11 In accordance with a fourth preferred embodiment, the novel advertising inserts
12 comprise an imprintable substrate sheet having a vertical fold therein. For example, as
13 will be appreciated from **FIGS. 17** and **18**, insert **70** comprises an imprintable substrate
14 sheet **71** having a single fold thereby forming layers **71a** and **71b**.

15 The length and width of the formed insert **70**, as discussed above in reference to
16 the other preferred embodiments **10**, **30**, and **50**, preferably approximate the length and
17 width of message slips used in traditional fortune cookies, but the dimensions may vary
18 as appropriate. Likewise, the substrate sheet **71** may be composed from the same
19 materials and imprinted as discussed above in reference to the other preferred
20 embodiments.

21 It will be appreciated that by incorporating a vertical fold, the size of the sheet and
22 the area available for imprinting an advertising message will be increased substantially.
23 For example, if a single vertical fold is used, the sheet may be made twice as large, but
24 the formed insert will still have the height and width of a traditional message insert.
25 Likewise, with two vertical folds the sheet may be made three or four times as large,
26 depending on the folding pattern. The space available for imprinting a message will be
27 likewise increased.

28 Fortune cookies with the novel advertising insert **70** may be produced by making
29 relatively minor modifications to conventional processes and machinery. For example, as
30 shown in **FIGS. 20**, the novel advertising insert **70** may be fabricated from a continuous

1 web 72 that will provide a plurality of sheets 71 defined by cut lines 73, each having a
2 message imprinted thereon. Preferably, the web 72 is provided with index holes 74 to
3 facilitate feeding and registration of the web 72. Alternately, however, the web may be
4 provided with printed index bars and registered with an optical reader system.

5 A preferred system 80 for forming and placing the insert 70 in a cookie as it is
6 formed is shown schematically FIG. 21. As shown therein, web 72 is carried on a roll 81
7 and fed through a plow-type folder 86 which folds web 72 along fold line 75. The folded
8 web 72 is then fed over tension rollers 87a and 87b and through hole punching rollers
9 88a and 88b which provide web 72 with index holes 74. The web 72 is then fed through
10 an index roller 82 to a cutting station where a cutting knife 83 cuts the folded web 72
11 along the cut lines 73. The insert 70 formed thereby then is allowed to fall onto a cookie
12 blank 84 carried on a conveyor surface 85. While system 80 is preferred because it may
13 be incorporated relatively easily into conventional automated fortune cookie baking
14 apparatus, other systems may be used and will be obvious to those working in the art. .

15 While insert 70 is provided with a single vertical fold, the novel inserts of the
16 subject invention may comprise two or more vertical folds. For example, insert 170
17 shown in FIG. 19 comprises two vertical folds. The folds are accordion like and form an
18 insert having three layers 171a, 171b, and 171c. Insert 270 shown in FIG. 25 also has
19 two vertical folds. The insert is formed by folding and then refolding a sheet, and thus, it
20 has four layers 271a, 271b, 271c, and 271d. The precise number of folds and the pattern
21 of folding is a matter of choice, although the limit on the number of folds that may be
22 accommodated in a cookie of a given size will vary depending on the number of factors
23 such as the thickness of the sheet. Generally it may be preferable to use thinner sheets as
24 the number of folds in the insert increases. The apparatus and processes required for
25 folding the substrate also become more complicated as the number of folds and the
26 complexity of the folding pattern is increased. For example, insert 270 may be more
27 easily formed than insert 170 because it may be formed with a single folding blade.

28 It also will be appreciated that webs 52 and 72 used, respectively, in systems 60
29 and 80, are vertically oriented. That is, the width of webs 52 and 72 is sized to the
30 desired width of sheets 51 and 71 from which inserts 50 and 70 are formed. For example,

1 the width of web **52** is equal to the desired width for sheet **51** of insert **50**. Thus, by
2 horizontally orienting and printing a web, system **60** may be used to apply a vertical fold
3 and system **80** may be used to apply a horizontal fold. For example, if the width of web
4 **52** is sized to the height of sheet **51**, system **80** could be used to apply a horizontal fold to
5 web **52** and to ultimately form insert **50**.

6 The novel advertising inserts also may be provided with horizontal and vertical
7 folds. For example, as shown in its unfolded state in **FIG. 22**, an insert **90** may comprise
8 a sheet **91** having a horizontal fold **92** and a vertical fold **93**. Such inserts may be formed,
9 for example, from a system similar to system **80** that also includes a folding blade such as
10 that used in system **60**. While folds that are substantially horizontally and vertically
11 oriented are preferred in most cases because they generally maximize the amount of
12 increase in imprintable surface area on a rectangular insert while minimizing the space
13 occupied by the insert, non-vertical and non-horizontal folds and folding patterns may be
14 provided. Moreover, the sheet that is folded to form the insert may have a non-
15 rectangular shape and be provided with folds appropriate to such shape, as will be
16 appreciated by those skilled in the art. Multiple sheet inserts such as inserts **10**, **110**, **30**,
17 **130**, **230** may be provided with horizontal or vertical folds or other types of folds. For
18 example, as shown in **FIG. 26**, insert **190** comprises two sheets having a single horizontal
19 fold, thereby forming an insert having four layers **191a**, **191b**, **191c**, and **191d**. Tandem
20 feed systems may be used to provide cookies with more than one novel insert or a novel
21 insert and a traditional fortune message.

22 It also will be appreciated that instead of a system such as system **80**, webs may be
23 prefolded as desired and used in a system such as system **20** to provide folded inserts.
24 For example, inserts **70** may be formed by prefolding and rolling web **72** and then feeding
25 the prefolded web **72** from the roll into system **20**. Finally, it will be appreciated that the
26 novel inserts may be completely preformed, and fed into conventional cookie baking
27 apparatus with minor modifications. For example, preformed inserts may be releasably
28 applied to a carrier web and fed via the carrier web to a station where they are flicked or
29 picked off the web and placed on a cookie blank. Alternately, preformed inserts may be

1 stacked, for example, in magazines, and then picked or otherwise dispensed from the
2 magazine onto cookie blanks.

3 It will be appreciated that by increasing the imprintable area of the insert, more
4 extensive and sophisticated advertising messages may be provided even in traditionally
5 sized fortune cookies. Traditionally sized message slips, assuming the slip includes a
6 traditional "fortune" message, generally have only about 1.72 square inches of
7 imprintable area, and the height of the slip is quite small relative to its width. Such
8 imprintable areas are poorly suited to much more than very simple branding messages,
9 such as an advertisers name, slogan, or logo. In particular, as a practical matter it is
10 impossible to provide a redeemable manufacturer coupon via traditional message slips
11 because of size constraints. A manufacturer typically will include a bar code that is
12 machine readable and used in systems that manage accounting between a coupon issuer
13 and a merchant who honors the coupon. The size of such bar codes must be sufficiently
14 large so that it may be easily and accurately read, but in doing so, there is little or no room
15 left on a traditional message slip to associate an advertising message with the bar code.

16 In contrast, the novel inserts, by providing significantly greater imprintable areas,
17 may incorporate much more sophisticated advertising messages. Consider, for example,
18 insert 50. Because sheet 51 from which it is formed is at least twice as large as a
19 traditional message slip, a traditional "fortune" message along with a bar code may be
20 imprinted on one face of sheet 51. The other face of sheet 51 then may be used to imprint
21 an advertising message that will inform a consumer of the basic terms of a redeemable
22 manufacturer coupon. At the same time, because the novel inserts comprise relatively
23 thin folded or superimposed sheets, the space required to accommodate the inserts in a
24 fortune cookie is substantially the same.

25 Preferably the bar code imprinted on the insert meets standards for UPC bar codes
26 utilizing the UCC/EAN-128 Article Numbering System as are known in the industry, but
27 other information may be encoded therein. It also will be appreciated that other machine
28 readable indicia may be provided in association with the coupon or other advertising
29 message, such as suitably encoded magnetic media films, provided they are acceptable for
30 use in association with food products.

1 Accordingly, when they are used in conjunction with traditionally sized fortune
2 cookies which are made from blanks approximately 3 inches in diameter, the novel
3 inserts preferably will provide an imprintable area in excess of about 3.5 square inches,
4 which is believed to be the approximate maximum total imprintable area provided for in
5 traditionally sized message slips. More preferably, the novel inserts will comprise in
6 excess of about 7.0 square inches, more preferably in excess of about 10.5 square inches,
7 and most preferably in excess of 14.0 square inches so as to provide for more
8 sophisticated advertising messages and, in particular, redeemable manufacturer coupons.

9 As a further example, inserts **10** and **30** may be used to provide two manufacturer
10 coupons. Two of the sheets incorporated in those inserts may be imprinted with a bar
11 code on one face and an advertising message on the other face. The third sheet could be
12 imprinted with a traditional "fortune" message on one face and a branding message on the
13 other face.

14 The methods of the subject invention are directed to disseminating advertising
15 messages to consumers of fortune cookies. The novel methods comprise providing an
16 advertising insert for fortune cookies wherein the advertising insert is one of the novel
17 inserts of the subject invention. That is, the inserts are chosen from the group consisting
18 of the novel inserts described herein or any subgroup thereof. A fortune cookie then is
19 produced with the novel insert and distributed to consumer outlets. The fortune cookie
20 with the novel inserts then may be provided to consumers shopping at, purchasing from,
21 targeted by, or otherwise associated with the consumer outlets, thereby disseminating the
22 advertising message to the consumers. The consumer outlet typically will be restaurants
23 or other food service establishments and grocery stores and other retail food outlets.

24 The subject invention also provides for novel methods for packaging and
25 distributing fortune cookies for dissemination to a target consumer group. Those
26 methods comprise providing fortune cookies having therein an advertising insert which
27 has imprinted thereon an advertising message for a target consumer group. The fortune
28 cookies are packaged in a shipping carton having a machine readable indicator uniquely
29 associated with the advertising message. The indicator then is read and, in response to
30 the reading, the carton containing the fortune cookies is shipped to consumer outlets

1 associated with the target consumer group. The advertising message then may be
2 disseminated to the target consumer group through the consumer outlets.

3 For example, an advertiser may wish to limit its campaign to consumers in a
4 specific geographical area or associated with specific types of consumer outlets. A code
5 or other indicator may be assigned to that message and stored in a machine readable
6 format or medium which is printed, affixed, or otherwise associated with the shipping
7 carton for cookies containing the advertiser's message. The indicator then may be read so
8 that the cookies will be shipped only to consumer outlets in the geographic area or of the
9 particular type targeted by the advertiser.

10 The shipping cartons may be any carton suitable for shipping fortune cookies and
11 many such cartons are known and currently in use. Likewise, the machine readable
12 indicator, and the apparatus for reading such indicators, may be selected from any such
13 systems as are known in the art. For example, the indicator could be a bar code readable
14 by conventional bar code readers. Alternately, the indicator could be text or numerical
15 code that may be scanned and interpreted by conventional scan readers. The indicator
16 also could be encoded on a microchip, magnetic strip, or other media for recording data.
17 Other systems for storing and reading an indicator are known and may be used if desired.

18 It will be appreciated, therefore, that the novel methods allow for efficient and
19 effective dissemination of advertising messages to targeted consumers.

20 While this invention has been disclosed and discussed primarily in terms of
21 specific embodiments thereof, it is not intended to be limited thereto. Other
22 modifications and embodiments will be apparent to the worker in the art.